

## LIVINGSTON COUNTY KOREAN WAR “COMMEMORATIVE COMMUNITY” ACTIVITY

**House Bill 5996 as passed by the House  
Second Analysis (10-19-00)**

**Sponsor: Rep. Judith Scranton  
Committee: Transportation**

### ***THE APPARENT PROBLEM:***

As part of the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Korean War (June 1950 to July 1953), the United States Department of Defense (DOD) is sponsoring “commemorative community programs.” According to the DOD website (<http://korea50.army.mil>), the purpose of the Korean War commemorations is threefold:

- *To honor the Korean War veterans, their family members, especially families who lost loved ones;*
- *To provide Americans with a clear understanding and appreciation of the lessons and history of the Korean War; and*
- *To educate every generation of Americans on the historical impact of the Korean War in saving a nation from enslavement and preserving peace, freedom, and prosperity.*

Under the DOD program, military and civilian communities, schools, business, and corporations can become “Commemorative Communities” by agreeing to develop annual programs and to host at least three events each year. The 50th Anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration Committee has a list of suggested commemorative activities and projects, ranging from honoring Korean War veterans and their families, to supporting school programs that teach the history of this era. One of the suggested commemorative activities is to re-dedicate the names of streets, buildings, or trees to commemorate Korean War leaders, Medal of Honor recipients, well-known veterans or campaigns. The Livingston County Veterans Council, a county association of all of the veterans’ groups in the county, applied to become a “commemorative community,” and as one of their commemorative activities proposes to erect two signs commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Korean War along two of the three major roads in the county for two years. However, because all three major roads are state roads, the council cannot erect

commemorative signs without statutory authorization in the form of “memorializing” (that is, naming) the highways.

At the request of the Livingston County Veterans Council and the Livingston County Board of Commissioners, legislation has been introduced to allow this Korean War commemorative activity.

### ***THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:***

The bill would create a new act to name portions of highway M-59 and M-36 as the “Korean War 50th Anniversary Memorial Highway.” Specifically, the bill would name the portion of M-59 beginning at the eastern county line of Livingston and Oakland Counties and extending west to end at Interstate 96, and the portion of M-36 beginning at the eastern border of the township of Hamburg and ending at the western border of the village of Pinckney. The bill would require the Department of Transportation to erect suitable markers indicating the name of the highway when sufficient private collections were received to completely cover the cost of the markers.

### ***BACKGROUND INFORMATION:***

Korean War. On June 25, 1950, North Korea (the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea) invaded South Korea (the Republic of Korea), attacking across the 38th parallel in an attempt to unify the divided peninsula and initiating the Korean War. Under resolutions passed by the United Nations Security Council, a multinational U.N. force, led by U.S. Army General Douglas MacArthur, was formed to “repel the armed attack [on South Korea] and to restore international peace and security to the area.” In November 1950, the People’s Republic of China entered the war on the side of the North Koreans. In June 1951, the Soviet delegate to the United Nations suggested negotiations to end armed hostilities, but

during the two years of peace talks, “opposing forces remained locked in bloody, inconclusive combat, at a tremendous loss of life.” Finally, on July 27, 1953, representatives for the United States and North Korea, who also represented China, signed a “Military Armistice Agreement.” South Korea refused to sign the agreement because a permanently divided Korean Peninsula was unacceptable to it, and in the absence of a political settlement, the 1953 agreement continues to regulate the de facto boundary between North and South Korea to this day.

Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial Highway. Public Act 240 of 1991 designated highway M-59, between Howell on the east and highway M-3 near Mount Clemens on the west (except for the portion of M-59 between Pontiac and Utica), as “the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial Highway.”

### ***FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:***

The House Fiscal Agency says the bill would have no fiscal impact. (9-29-00)

### ***ARGUMENTS:***

#### ***For:***

Livingston County has been designated by the federal government as a Korean War 50th Anniversary Commemorative Community, which, among other things, requires the county to engage in three commemorative events over a three-year period. One of the Livingston County Veterans Council’s planned commemorative activities is to place two signs along major roadways in the county. However, because the three major roadways all are state highways, the council has been informed that it will need legislative authority, in the form of a statute, in order to do this. The bill would enable the council to include two road signs, put up for three years (the length of the Korean War).

#### ***Against:***

One of the highways in question -- M-59 -- already has been statutorily designated as “the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial Highway.” Would the proposed designation of the highway in the bill supercede this designation? Moreover, since the Korean conflict never was officially designated a war by Congress, technically the proposed name actually would be a misnomer.

#### ***Response:***

Reportedly, the effect of the bill, if enacted, would be a dual designation and not a cancellation of the earlier designation of the highway in memory of the Vietnam

War veterans. Moreover, the intent of the Livingston County Veterans Council is simply to place two Korean War commemorative signs along the proposed highways for the three-year commemorative period. The council’s intent was not to rename the highways in question, but apparently the only way the Department of Transportation will allow the council to erect the two commemorative signs is through the rather cumbersome mechanism of naming the highways through statute. The council in no way wishes to impinge upon the designation of M-59 as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway, but can only put up the Korean War memorial signs on the state highways through the mechanism proposed in the bill. Finally, even though Congress never officially declared war in Korea (which, technically, was a United Nations’ “police action”), that is how the conflict was experienced by Americans and how it is popularly known. It is this general public understanding that the proposed name would reflect.

### ***POSITIONS:***

The Livingston County Veterans Council (an organization consisting of all of the 14 veteran organization posts in the county) supports the bill. (10-19-00)

The Livingston County Board of Commissioners supports the bill. (10-19-00)

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#This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.